/46/

Chapter VI. Customs and Practices

1. Birth

852 Twelve days after the birth of a Miao child, his family always holds a "twelfth-day" celebration for him; after a month there is a "first-month" celebration. The family kills chickens and cook meat. They ask a Taoist priest to come to pray for him and name him. 551 The child is usually named "Ya Ta" /Ya the Elder/ or "Ya Erh" /Ya the Second/, etc. There is also a celebration of his first birthday, but the way it is celebrated is unknown to me.

2. Marriage

582 The Miao are generally betrothed when they are about twenty years old. Betrothals are either made through the decision of the 584 parents and the advice of go-betweens, or they are made after a couple have fallen in love and ask the parents for permission and the consultation of a go-between. In the latter case, the parents always respect their children's wishes. According to Miao custom, however, before the formal betrothal, the hour, day, month, and year of birth of the young couple (these are entered in the family registers) must be "compared" by someone who is able to read the almanac well [622 (generally a chia-ch'ang). If their horoscopes are in harmony with 787] each other and are not contradictory to those of the parents of both families, they are formally betrothed; otherwise, they must give each other up. Therefore, even if a couple are deeply in love and the match is approved of by the parents, if, unfortunately, their horoscopes are not "harmonious," they cannot marry. Many tragedies of lovers have resulted therefrom. 583 Betrothal presents consist of [837] about 20 dollars (previously 10 dollars or less), three jars of wine, three pecks of rice, and 30 catties of pork. There are two types of marriage: one is the ch'ü-hsi, in which the betrothal presents are 583 given by the bridegroom's /47/ family; the other is the chao-chui 591 /literally, "to call a son-in-law," a marriage in which the son-in-608 law comes to live in the wife's family/ in which the betrothal presents are given by the bride's family.

M /19 cont./
*101 (4) Yeh T'ou Miao. — This group also belongs to the He
CC Miao. When a girl is married, she must marry the son of her
563 maternal uncle. If the latter has no son, he must be given
M presents of ornaments and money. Otherwise she may not
[582] get married at all.

(5) Tung Tsai Miao. — They are not as numerous as the Yeh T'ou Miao, and live in separate villages. The Yeh
M Tou villages are known as the Big Villages and the Tung Tsai
[628] ones as the Small Villages, the latter being subservient to the
[582] former. Marriage is restricted to their own villages. A secret
[502] marriage to a member of a big village is a violation. The Tung Tsai are good boatmen. In Mi-no these are such tribe-
M men.
[345] (6) Pa Chai Miao. — This group is also a part of the He
[533] Miao. Near the village is provided an empty shed, where un-
[517] married men and women gather together to sing. If a couple
[584] fall in love, a cow is sent as a betrothal gift. One or two days
[583] after marriage the girl goes back home and still asks for money from her husband. If the money is not given she may marry again. In Ya-yu this custom still exists today.

/20/ (7) Ch'ien /Bamboo Grove/ Miao. — Another
M branch of the He Miao, there are many at Lieh-erh-shan.
[241] They live in dense bamboo groves on the mountain. They are
[262] not good at farming but grow some grain. They consider
[291] hempseed to be food and use hemp for their clothes.

[882] (8) Ch'ing Chiang He Miao /Ch'ing River Black Miao/. —
[527] The unmarried men are called "lohan" and the unmarried
[584] women, "laopei." In the spring they carry wine and food up
[851] the mountain, singing and dancing reciprocally. Those who become fond of each other drink from an ox horn and get
[167] married. After a son is born, they then say they have a descendant, and begin to be willing to work in the field.

[291] (9) Pe /White/ Miao. — They originated in Kwei-ting
[302] and Lung-li in Kweichow. They esteem white clothes, go
[782] bareheaded and barefooted, and coil up their hair with crude
[769] hairpins. A big bull is selected for the ancestral sacrifice.

/20 cont./ in the villages around Shang-shih-li. Men learn trades and women weave and embroider. Unmarried people often gather together for moon parties out in the open, at which men beat the monkey drums and women sing in accompaniment. It is said that over 600 of Ma San-pao's soldiers remained as husbands who lived in their wives families. Consequently they are also called the Six Hundred Untamed Miao.

(14) Hsi-Ch'i Miao. — Formerly most of these lived in Chi-an-p'ing. The women's skirts do not cover the knees, and they wrap the legs with green cloth. Unmarried men and women have drinking parties in the open to find mates. After a son is born, a cow is given as a bridal gift /to the girl's family/.

(15) P'ing Fa Miao. — Originally they were from Kuei-ting hsien in Kweichow, and some of them also lived in P'ing-ch'a-szu in Szechwan. Today, many of this tribe are also found at Pai-liao. They like to kill dogs to make sacrifices to the spirits or to entertain guests. The men wear straw wraps and short skirts; the women wear long skirts and bind their hair into a knot.

/21/ (16) Tung Miao. — They originally came from Lung-li and Ch'ing-p'ing in Kweichow. Today, they are still numerous in the villages of Liu-li. The men wrap their heads with cotton prints and wear light-blue short garments. The women wear green embroidered cotton garments with very tight sleeves. Every mid-autumn festival they make sacrifices to their ancestors and dead clan members, and invite a sorcerer to their homes. They place food and wine on a wooden board, and calling out the spirits' names they dance and sing. (The spirits have such names as Pao-t'ung, Po-ch'a, Po-chi, etc.) What is commonly called "K'ou-ch'e seven maidens and the cursed spirits" in this sub-prefecture are both remains of this custom.

(17) Hua /Flower/ Miao. — In Ya-yu and Ya-pao there are many of this tribe. The clothes they wear are first covered with designs in wax, and then dyed. After the dyeing, the wax is washed out and the designs appear.

/94 cont./

836 carry wine and food up the mountain, singing and dancing re-
517 ciprocally. Those who became fond of each other would drink
[533] from an ox horn. There is the custom among the Miao of
[535] dancing for the new year, dancing for the moon, and singing for autumn. On such occasions, young men and women form groups and sing in response to each other all night until daybreak. After singing they mix with each other, drinking and joking, even to the extent of having sexual relations. This is called fang yeh "going wild."

582 Although unmarried men and women are free to fall in love,
[584] marriage, however, requires parental consent as well as the approval of the maternal uncle of the girl. The He Miao of Ch'ing Chiang, Kweichow have a marriage custom where they betroth the daughter of a paternal aunt to be the daughter-in-law of a maternal uncle. Should the maternal uncle have no son, the girl's family has to pay a large sum of money to him. Without such a payment the girl all her life may not marry. The Miao, other than close paternal cousins not being suitable mates, they do not object to marriage between people of the same surname. However, maternal cousins may not marry.
582 This is a survival from a matrilineal society, because in a
611 matrilineal society maternal cousins have the same surname whereas cross cousins or male and female first cousins on the father's side have different surnames. That maternal cousins cannot marry is evidence of their advance from a matrilineal society to a patrilineal society. The importance of the maternal uncle's position in sacrificial ceremonies as well as in the society is additional evidence.

584 The former marriage customs of the Miao were slightly
583 different from their present ways. Yung-sui T'ing Chih says: "Miao marriage is just like a purchase. They do not follow the /Chinese/ custom of asking names (as a preliminary to fixing a betrothal) and sending presents to the bride's home to fix the betrothal. They only negotiate about the number of horses and cattle through a broker. The broker is a Miao marriage go-between. It definitely requires five or six horses or heads
008 of cattle to initiate a trade for one wife. When the agreement

/94 cont./ When the agreement
585 is reached an inauspicious /sic/ day is chosen to welcome the
[292] wife. The bride wears a moon-white gown and walks holding a parasol, half open, half shut, called the shame-hiding parasol. Her father and mother, brothers, and relatives escort her to
[583] the husband's house. The dowry consists of everything from cattle and sheep and goats to plows and harrows. They do not enter by the main door but through a hole bored through a wall. Men and women sit together. The bride is not allowed to look left or right, or else the husband would be displeased for fear that shermay be fond of some one else. The couple takes each a bowl of rice, a piece of fish, and a cup of wine dregs. Next they visit the paternal uncles' houses in the same village, at each eating and drinking the same items. On their return home they are husband and wife, but they do not spend the night together." It also says: "The Miao do not object to marriage
[582] between people of the same surname, but relatives do not marry. On the wedding night the bride sleeps with her mother, who leaves only when the groom gives her some silver as a gift /95/, called the "mother's money" or "milk money." It is generally about two or three liang of silver. A wealthy family,
556 seeing a pretty girl, might order their son to drag the girl from
583 behind. This is called "carrying off a woman and marrying
584 her by force." The girl's family attracted by their wealth, do not engage the girl to anyone else, but get a go-between to discuss betrothal presents. When a virgin has an affair with
836 a man, her parents know about it but do not forbid it. On the contrary, they consider this evidence that the man finds her desirable. But, if one's wife or concubine is seduced, then
684 they raise knives, facing each other, and money is required
[837] as compensation. If a husband and wife do not get along,
586 the husband may divorce her and marry again, and the wife may do the same. As to improper sexual conduct, instances
837 were very rare even in former days, and today the Miao have become more aware of ethical and moral obligations." (What is recorded in the Miao Fang Pei Lan is to the same effect.)

/95 cont./

584 [177] Today, the marriage customs of the Miao have been thoroughly influenced by the Chinese and have changed from the old ways. Boys and girls who like each other return home and tell their parents. The boy's family finds a go-between to approach the girl's family to discuss marriage. Once, twice, and sometimes three or four times, such approaches may be made before an agreement is reached. Having had indications of assent from the girl's family, the go-between goes back to report to the boy's family, who get ready two bottles of wine [554] (a wealthy family would send along two chin of meat and two chin of noodles besides the wine). The gifts are carried back by the go-between to the girl's family, who invite him to drink wine and eat noodles. Where this procedure has been gone through then they reckon it to be the preliminary engagement, which in the Miao language is called (ɲiaŋ7 tɛɣ mpʿaɣ7), meaning "to let the girl go," also translated as /Chinese/ fang k'ou "to let go the mouth /door?/."

After the preliminary engagement a period of time is allowed to elapse. Then the ceremony of sticking in incense [782] has to take place, which is called /soŋ7 tʿiɤɣ/, with the meaning of /Chinese/ na ts'ai, i.e. the sending of gifts to the bride's home and fix the betrothal. The date is selected by the boy's family, who then informs the girl's family. The gifts generally [583] consist of 50 or 60 strings of cash, one outfit of clothing, a pair of earrings, a pair of bracelets, a few boxes of rice cakes, two chin of sweetmeats, two packages of firecrackers , one chin of oil, one chin of salt, a jug of wine, and several chin of meat. The quantity of the foregoing gift items depends largely upon [556] the financial condition of the boy's family. Poor families may [583] omit a few items, but money, clothes, rings, bracelets, firecrackers, wine, meat, incense and candles are necessary items. These gifts are carried by the brothers of the future groom, followed by the go-between, the future groom, and his father, to the girl's family. Sometimes, the future groom may not go. When the gifts arrive at the door to the house, firecrackers are set off, and the party is received outside the door by the clan

/95 cont./

584 brothers in the girl's family. After entering the door and a brief
[782] rest, the ceremony of sticking incense before the ancestral tablet of the girl's family begins. The groom kowtows three times. If he is not present, his father kowtows in his place. If the groom is present he must also kowtow to his future father-in-law, mother-in-law, and other elders. If the girl's family
[556] is wealthy, then a pig will be killed to entertain the guests from the groom's family. The guests remain in the girl's family
574 for three days, during which the immediate relative of the
584 girl's family take turns in entertaining them with meals, called "meals from door to door." The closest relatives must enter-
[264] tain the visitors at breakfast, because breakfast is considered the most important meal in the Miao countryside. For instance, say there are six families, A, B, C, D, E, and F, with A and C being the closest relatives. Dinner on the first evening is given by the host family. /96/ breakfast on the second day is given by family A, lunch by family E, and dinner by family B. On the third day breakfast is given by family C, lunch by family F, and dinner by family D. When the guests are seen off on the fourth day, breakfast is given by the host family. As a rule three meals are served in a day, but when there are a large
[264] number of /clan/ brothers there are five or six meals in one day.
●583 After breakfast on the fourth day the guests depart. Return
584 presents from the girl's family consist of a suit of clothes, a pair of shoes, and a hat for the future son-in-law, a piece of material for a pair of trousers for each guest, a pair of shoes each for the parents of the groom, and a pig's leg for the go-between.

585 A few months or half a year before the marriage the go-
787 between visits the girl's family to ask for the date and time
777 of her birth. He must bring with him two or four strings of cash
584 and some sweetmeats. This ceremony is called "asking for the lucky birth date." The girl's birth date and time thus obtained are matched with those of the groom in order to pick an auspicious day for the wedding. The date is communicated to
583 the girl's family through the go-between. They then begin to

/96 cont./

583 get busy with the bride's marriage portion. Most commonly it consists of one or two trunks, four or five garments making one outfit, two pairs of trousers, and a suit of clothes for the groom. [301] Such women's ornaments as earrings, rings, bracelets, and neck rings have been sent previously by the groom's family to the bride's, or silver is sent instead for the bride's family to have the ornaments made of it. On the day set the groom's 585 family send along wine, meat, firecrackers, incense and candles, and torches, and recently they include sedan chairs or chairs. When they arrive before the entrance of the bride's [177] family, recently, in imitation of the Chinese custom, they close the entrance and demand money for opening the gate in the sum of eight hundred cash or one string /one thousand/ of cash. Further, they intentionally curse the go-between and complain that the gifts of wine and meat sent by the boy's family are not enough. The bride then gets dressed up, and [756] [782] meanwhile a Miao sorcerer is invited to make sacrifices to the ancestors. A square table is laid with sacrificial items, incense [787] and candles, and the sorcerer priest recites incantations, kowtows, and performs divination with straws, to cut off the powers of evil. He lights two torches, opens a parasol, and invites the bride to come out to kowtow three times to the ancestral tablet. After this she kowtows once to her parents, once to all her brothers and paternal male cousins, and once to her maternal grandparents. This done, she turns around facing outside and [554] mounts the sedan chair (in a rich family) or walks (middle-class family), holding a half-opened parasol. The brothers, sisters, cousins, mother's married sisters, mother's brothers wives, and mother of the bride accompany her on the way. If the bride arrives too early at her husband's house, she has to wait in a side building or take a rest in a neighbor's house. At 585 that time a table is laid in front of the entrance with incense 782 and candles, a piece of cooked meat, and three cups of wine. [75] A guest sorcerer offers the following prayer:

[539] "The day is auspicious, the moment is opportune,
Heaven and earth open out.

/98 cont./

574 for three days, the same as at the time of "sticking in incense."
585 They are also entertained in rotation by the closest relatives of the host. After breakfast on the third day a large table is set
583 up in the main room. Eloquent elder men and women of the
585 two families are invited to sit down around the table to count and announce the number of presents from the bride's family. First, the suit, shoes, and hat from the bride's parents to the son-in-law are announced, next the material for trousers from the guests to the groom, and then the presents from the bride's family to the elders of the groom's family. Then they record the cash and articles presented by the groom's family in return to the bride's family. For instance, if the dowry from the girl's family was 80 strings of cash, the groom's family returns
[556] 50. In a family of wealth, this money is usually left with the bride and not taken back. The guests who presented trousers receive one or two strings of cash in return. The bridesmaids also receive one or two strings of cash. The bride's family receives a pig's leg, and the go-between gets a pig's head.
[533] While the presents are being announced, the men and women sitting around the table talk and sing, in response to each other. (See Chapter 11, "Folk Songs," songs no. 19, 20, 21, and 22, "Seeing the Guests off on the Third Morning.) During these
585 three days the bride and groom do not share the same room. When the bride's family is escorted back, the bride goes along and stays for one or three days before she comes back to her new home to share the room with the groom.

586 Divorces are very easy with the Miao. The lack of good looks, a difference in wealth between the families, incompatibility, lack of good behavior — any of these constitutes grounds for divorce. Either side may initiate a divorce action. The children of a divorced couple are generally kept by the man, but an unweaned baby is kept by the woman to be restored to the man when it grows up. If the man's family is destitute, the children are kept by the woman's family. After the divorce
587 either side may remarry at will.

10: Graham E-5 (1921-?) 1954 AE5 Miao AE5

engagement is made. There is generally no love between the bride and the groom unless it is after marriage. Love affairs, which are many, are often between a man and another man's wife or between a woman and another woman's husband. Sometimes lovers run away together, after which go-betweens endeavor to obtain the consent of the bride's parents, and the gift to her parents must be made as usual. Marriage by capture is not unknown. Strange to say, women rather like this method, for it shows that the man loves or esteems the woman, and it often results in a happy marriage. 000 837 583

There are no physicians, although some persons are reputed to know more about medicines and healing than others, and the efficacy of the medicines has not yet been scientifically investigated. The common belief is that all diseases and other calamities are caused by demons, which must be exorcised by the *do nun* or *tuan kung*, who is a magician or shaman. He has a formula for every disease, and besides using ceremonies and incantations to exorcise the demons that cause diseases or other calamities, he performs many real wonders, among which are treading with bare feet on a red-hot plowshare and touching his tongue to the same, spitting or spurting hot oil out of his mouth onto a fire to cause a larger blaze, and with bare feet walking over a ladder of sharp swords. It is not strange that the death rate among the Ch'uan Miao is very high. 755 753 165

The Ch'uan Miao theory of filial piety and of the relation of mutual helpfulness between the deceased ancestors and their descendants corresponds fairly closely to that of the Chinese. The deceased ancestors are believed to be in need of the same things that they need on this earth before death, such as food, clothing, houses, and money, and these are provided by the loyal descendants through the ceremonial offerings. In return the ancestors help and protect their descendants so that they may prosper. 769

Soon after death the *mo* or priest three times calls on the soul of the dead to return or arise, and when it does not do so he performs a ceremony to open the way of the soul of the deceased to Hades, or to paradise, which is called the ancient level land of Ntzī, the supreme but not the only god. The priest kills a rooster, and the soul of the rooster leads the soul of the dead person to paradise. 775 764

Some time after the *mo* has opened the way for the soul of the deceased to go to paradise, there is a procession. In front is a man whirling a stick. He is followed by two men playing the *liu sheng* and dancing, then two blowing water-buffalo horns, two carrying green bamboo twigs, and finally two men with guns. Inside the house a ceremonial drum is beaten. This ceremony is symbolic of the fact that in ancient times their ancestors lived in the forest where there were dangerous wild animals.

During the funeral ceremonies a bull or a male water buffalo is killed and partly cooked, and some or all of it is offered to the ancestors. Then the meat is thoroughly cooked and there is a feast. Friends and relatives enjoy the feast, but the descendants of the deceased do not then eat any of the meat. 764

Generally on the next night after the bull is killed a dance is performed by the strongest young men inside the house. It takes place in front of the ceremonial 765

[10 cont.]

591 practiced by one tribe and then followed by others for so long a time that at last it was firmly established. There are only a few couples who are separated. In such cases, they would participate 587 in moon dance, chasing the moon, yao-ma-lang or kan-piao, and other such agencies of free love to seek their mate for a second marriage.

When a boy reaches the age of fourteen or fifteen the 584 [582] parents usually negotiate marriage for him. First, a friend or a relative is asked to approach a girl's family to propose marriage. When the latter family approves, the go-between would bring the boy and his parents over for an interview. If both sides are satisfied, they then start negotiations of gifts and dowry and make arrangements for the engagement. If one side is not satisfied the matter is dropped. This refers to total strangers: between those who are acquainted with each other such arrangements are unnecessary. In the old days the gift and dowry were 583 given in terms of the number of cows instead of money. Recently, they have been changed to silver pieces, and the larger the amount, the more magnificent it is for the girl's family. If the amount is small then the girl's status is considered low and it becomes a disgrace to the family. When the question of the bride price is settled (with the Hua Miao the highest gift comes to $100 or more) the go-between appoints a date to convey it to the girl's family. Accepting the gift, the family gives a feast, in which friends and relatives are invited to keep the go-between company and to regale him with meat and wine. This is the engagement. Before the wedding day, the gift donation must be fully paid up through the go-between; but if the girl's family is fond of the future son-in-law, half or all the bride price may be waived. On the wedding day the bridegroom's family sends along 585 a man and a woman to welcome the bride, and sometimes the groom goes there himself. (But the groom must provide meat and wine as a welcome home feast.) The bride's parents would ask a few young girls to keep the bride company the night before, and before daybreak the party would commence the wedding march, the bride shaded under a bridal parasol. On arrival at the groom's house, the members of the party have to leap across

[20 cont.]

539 Little sister thinking of her boy -
In pain;
Big brother thinking of his girl -
Nonchalantly.

IX

After breakfast a cliff we climb,
We throw leaves down the sand-bank,
Fishes are dead, big and small --
Without lover, 'tis never all.

X

The ants climbing a tree do not fear its height,
When you woo a maiden, you fear not another's might.
In love you should not be afraid of death,
Distant Yunnan is so near if you must measure your sword.

584 The engagement procedure is rather simple, and no exchange of "eight characters" [indicating the year, month, day and hour of the birth of betrothed persons] or selection of a lucky date is required. After the approval of the parents, the go-between may formally make arrangements, first bringing over the dowry in the form of a "chao-tai" [visiting belt?] to the boy's home. The return gift from the boy's family, which must now be agreed upon, averages from ten to forty dollars in cash. The boy's family further sends through the go-between a flower patterned cloth parasol for deposit in the girl's family and for use by the future bride when she goes to the husband's house at the time of the wedding. On the day of the engagement the boy's family may not provide a feast, but has to despatch three or four young men carrying to the girl's family wine, glutinous rice, chickens and ducks as well as $3.60, known as "niece's cash." (According to the Miao custom a girl should marry a

583 584

[20 cont.] (According to the Miao custom a girl should marry a
583 cousin on the mother's side, and if she is to marry somebody
584 else, she has to give money to her maternal uncle. This money
[582] is called "niece's cash.") The girl's family would then give a feast in honor of the go-between and invite other guests to keep him company.

585 [21] Marriages generally take place during the winter harvest in the second lunar month or the autumn harvest in the tenth lunar month. At that time the groom's family will again despatch three or four young men to the bride's family, carrying nine catties of pork, a package of glutinous rice weighing about two or three catties together with the cash gift negotiated at the time of the engagement. Announcement will also be made of the date for receiving the bride (about twenty days away on a horse day or a cow day). The return gift from the girl's family at the time consists only of a package of glutinous rice and a duck. But on the wedding day the bride's family has to despatch two men early in the morning to send over to the groom's family a slaughtered pig of about fifty to sixty catties and two big baskets, approximately four pecks, of glutinous rice to herald the arrival of the bride. At the wedding march the bride is arrayed in a flowered dress, holding in her hand the flowered parasol, sent previously by the groom's family, and accompanied by eleven male and female relatives. But halfway six of them must retract their steps because grown-up girls may not visit the groom. Among the other five, one young woman acts as the bride's maid and always keeps her company. The groom's family also despatches men to carry wine and rice to meet the bridal party halfway. When the two groups meet they picnic in the field. After this the bride and her kinsmen are conducted to the groom's family.

The bridal chamber is not so well decorated as that of the Chinese, and the furniture in the room is simple and plain.
[352] Except for one or two chests of drawers for the bride's clothes which come as a part of the dowry, the rest is provided by the groom and consists of a bed, a few stools, a wooden face-basin and a foot-basin. Quilts, pillows and mat are also provided by the groom's family. That day the celebration consists of singing

[21 cont.]

585 and drinking, which lasts throughout the night, neither hosts nor guests retiring. That night, the bride and groom do not share the room together. When tired the bride may lie down with the groom's younger sister. The next day the bride and her kinsmen return to her home. After three more days the bride is re-escorted to her husband's family by her brothers and male cousins. After a few days' stay she returns once more to her parents. Thus the wedding ceremony officially terminates. Later, every 591 time the husband wants his wife back he has to send over two or three sheng of glutinous rice to her family, and she will then come back with an escort of her kinsmen. Each year from the second to the eighth lunar month when farm work in her husband's family requires the help of the wife, she often goes over [22] but only for a few days as a guest without participating in housecleaning and cooking. Not until she becomes pregnant does the wife begin normal living with her husband to assume the responsibilities of the mistress of the household. This custom probably is a vestige of the transition from a maternal to a paternal society. In a maternal society the married woman does not leave her parents after marriage. The fact that the Miao woman does not stay with her husband before his child is born is probably due to this tradition. The paternal society lays much emphasis upon offsprings: only those women capable of procreation are considered good wives. The marriage before 583 conception, from the point of view of having heirs, is only 591 experimental. Therefore the wife cannot enjoy all her rights and privileges, and at the same time she may not assume the responsibilities associated with them. The result is a sort of quasi-marriage, that is, marriage in fact but not in form.

586 [584] There are a small number of pre-arranged marriages among the Short-skirt Hê Miao, negotiated by parents when the parties concerned are mere children. In such a marriage the bride often refuses to go back to her husband's family soon after returning to her own. This kind of girl is allowed to marry again on the condition that her second husband pays indemnity to the first one for expenses which the latter may incur in another

[MIAO]

/86 cont'd/

Mi 585 [262]

eaten first while drinking alcohol; it is only at the end that the corn meal is brought.... Each guest presents a coin upon his arrival. At the end of the evening meal the newly married man makes the ritual prostrations to the ancestors in the presence of all the assembled relatives, and without pronouncing a single word. He is assisted by his best man, who makes the same prostrations as he, and by an old man who enumerates aloud all the duties he will have to carry out henceforth in the tribe. Then they count the money contributed by the guests, and they take an inventory of the young wife's trousseau. This trousseau consists of clothes, skirts, turbans, belts, puttees, pieces of cloth, etc. Men and women examine...and admire the embroideries. The young wife in a corner weeps and sings to her companions the naive song of the bride...which recalls the elegy of the T'ou-jen bride on the road. At the departure of the guests the door is barricaded with a fagot to prevent the newly married wife from leaving. She watches her relatives leave through the slits of the partition.

Mi [585]

Mo [585 171]

We have spoken in the course of this work, following the notes of Father Schotter, of the girls who accompany the bride to the bridegroom's home.

Mi 582

Monogamy and exogamy seem to have always existed among the Miao. There exists also a law, or rather a custom which

[165 cont.]

585 The ceremonies which accompany the conclusion of a "Méo" marriage are just so many excuses for feasts and drinking bouts.

584 When a young man has cast his choice upon a young woman, he informs his father of his intentions. The latter selects two old men belonging to the family, whom he charges with going and making the official request in marriage. These two intermediaries, bearing gifts, go to the home of the young woman and are received by her father, who offers them food and drink. If this offer is made within the house, it means that the request is accepted in principle and that the terms may now be discussed. The neighbors are asked in and a small feast is held. (If the offer is made outside the house, it means that the request is not approved, the intermediaries content themselves with eating a morsel and drinking a small cup of alcohol, and withdraw without having entered the home.) The intermediaries then return to the home of the young man to announce the happy result of their mission and to participate in a series of feasts, which last for two days and to which all the relatives and friends of the fiancé are invited. The fiancé receives on this occasion all the gifts
● [583] which will enable him to make up the amount of the dowry agreed upon.

585 The engagements usually last only a short time. The "Méo"
[787] pay no attention to the agreement of the horoscopes. Upon the day [166] set for the marriage, the fiancé, accompanied by his friends and preceded by flute players, betakes himself to his fiancée's home, where he presents his gifts and where a monstrous feast begins which lasts throughout the day. The fiancée spends the night in her own house, surrounded by her friends, who aid her in making her preparations. The morning of the next day the fiancée dons her garments for grand ceremonies, which she generally wears only on that day. (If the fiancé is of another tribe, she assumes the costume of that tribe.) The cortege, formed of the two spouses accompanied by their friends of both sexes and preceded by "sen" players, goes to the home of the young man where the young wife is presented to her parents-in-law. In the tribes where ancestral worship is practiced,
[769] the newlyweds prostrate themselves before the altar. Then begin the feasts, the dances, and the songs, which often last for several
ooo days, according to the resources of the fiancé. The young couple

[166 cont.]

591 The young couple either remains in the paternal home or found a new household, in accordance with their choice.

Other forms of marriage are also practiced by the "Méo." 583 When an official request in marriage has been refused, it is not rare to see the young people pay no attention to the consent of their parents and elope together. When they return they secure their pardon by paying an indemnity to the parents of the young woman.

A poor "Méo" may wed a rich girl. In this case it is the girl's [556] family that bears all of the expenses of the ceremony, but the married couple enter into a contract to serve this family for a number of years agreed upon.

584 In the region of Pha-Long, the "Méo" observe a rather curious 583 custom and hold a sort of "marriage fair," to which come, in great numbers, young men and young women from several leagues roundabout. This gathering is held on a grassy plateau where boys and girls form in groups about twenty paces apart, turning their backs to each other. These groups sing alternating choruses, very simple ones, in which the young men boast of their skill, their strength, and their wealth and the young women glorify their housekeeping virtues and enumerate the treasures of their trousseaux. Often some sprightly word causes mirth throughout the gathering. The laughter, the songs, and the dances of the men playing the "sen" last throughout the entire afternoon. The sellers of alcohol and cakes do a very good business, while the youths and maidens become better acquainted and establish a basis for future unions.

584 It is during the days which follow this festival that the great majority of the official marriage requests are made. (Photo 154, Plate 40, shows the plateau where this marriage fair was held, near Pha-Long, on February 21, 1912. Photo 155, Plate 40 shows the dance of a "sen" player during the festival. Photos 156 and 157, Plate 40 show groups of young women [167] belonging to various "Meo" tribes of the region of Pha-Long who have come to the fair in question.)

595 Polygamy is authorized, although it is rare for the "Méo" to take a second wife, except when the first one remains sterile.

/97 cont./

A 582 Among the Akha, the marriage age for both sexes is between the sixteenth and twentieth year.

e) Courtship and Betrothal

M 583 183 For a Meau boy there are several ways to marry a girl. A common way taken is probably the one whereby a boy loves a girl, she bears a child, and later the parents of both give their consent. This way does not conform to the demands of "public opinion" and is therefore not customary among respectable families. A second way is to go out looking for a wife. M 584 The young man visits the various villages and selects a girl. Then he goes to his father or to the head of his large /extended/ family and asks for his advice. The ancestors are queried about M [787] it by way of an ordeal (see the chapter, "Religion and Magic," the section on "Magic, Soothsaying, Interpretation of Omens"). If the outcome of the ordeal is unfavorable, the young man drops the idea, but if the result is auspicious, he visits the girl's village again and asks her whether she consents to the proposed marriage. If the girl agrees, she leaves her parents' home in M [836] great secrecy and sleeps with the young man in the house of his parents. The next day, the young man's parents visit the parents of the bride in order to inform them of the fact, and they send them a pig. The latter for their part also now slaughter M [574] one and invite the relatives of the bridal couple to a feast. The two animals are eaten, rice liquor is copiously served, and the day for the wedding is set.

It often happens, however, that the girl refuses to leave her parents' house without their consent, that is to say, secretly. In this case, the young man /98/ asks his parents to visit the parents of the bride and ask for the girl. If the bride's parents give their consent, then everything is in order and the wedding day can be set. If the bride's parents do not give their permission, however, it is up to the girl to make the decision. She can still decide to spend a night secretly with the boy in M [836] his parents' home or simply to have intercourse with him until

/98 cont./

584 she becomes pregnant. In both cases, the parents of the girl
[836] will immediately withdraw their opposition.

583 It also happens in practice that the young people disregard all formalities and begin with cohabitation without consulting their parents. In this case, too, the parents of the girl can do nothing but belatedly approve of the accomplished fact.

584 When one considers all the various ways, it is apparent
593 that the girl's parents cannot assert their will against that of the daughter. The father of the young man, on the other hand, into whose sib and, in most cases, household community the girl is to be received, can exert extensive influence upon the decision of his son. If the father or head of the family does not like the girl, he can ultimately give the refusal of the ancestors as a pretext, and no son will dare to undertake anything against their will.

583 In contrast to my observations, Lajonquière reports of the
584 Meau in Indochina, as does Abadie (1) in almost the same words:

1. Page 166.

"It happens that marriages are concluded against the will of the parents. In this case the young people flee and, if they are found, pay an indemnity to the father of the girl. A small
[574] feast is celebrated, and everything is settled."

584 Marabail (2) makes the following statements on this

2. Page 459.

subject: "If a Meau wants to marry, he tells his father, without asking him for permission, for he is completely free. The father then sends two friends to the house of the girl's father. When they arrive, they plant two incense sticks in the ground in front of the door and light them. The master of the house then comes out and asks what they want. He listens to them,
[574] invites them to his room, and gives them something to drink. This is the sign that he has accepted the offer. As soon as the

/99 cont./

585 As a rule, marriages are concluded in the dry season, preferably between New Year and the beginning of the work in the fields.

583 585 [301] Among the Meau, on the wedding day, the bride's parents, according to their means, provide their daughter with silver neck ornaments and rings, and sometimes also with blankets which were bought at the market. The /100/ rest of the trousseau depends on the industry and skill of the girl, who has had to prepare it carefully over the years. This is why the trousseau of a girl from a simple family is often considerably more beautiful than that of a daughter of a distinguished household, even if the poor girl usually lacks the silver ornaments and purchased goods. The latter, on the other hand, sometimes are the entire trousseau of a rich, pleasure-seeking, and therefore lazy girl, according to my informant.

585 [152] The bride is led to the groom's house by her mother and all her kinswomen. As soon as their approach is announced by the scouts posted for this, the bridegroom, accompanied by his parents and relatives, goes out to meet her. The bride is now festively greeted, but without dancing, and is led by the bridegroom into the house of his parents. This often makes the bride weep, for with this step into marriage her life up to this time is ended and an uncertain future begins. Now the head of [782] [769] the large /extended/ family makes a sacrifice to the ancestors, informs them that a new member of the family has been received, and asks them to give her the same protection that they extend to the other members of the family.

[574] [554] [273] Everybody sits down to the feast, which lasts far into the night. As a rule three pigs are slaughtered for it, but among poor people there may be fewer and among rich people more; in addition plenty of alcohol distilled from rice or maize is served, but no beer. The bride spends the first three nights with the unmarried girls of the family, and not until [513] [595] the fourth evening does she move to the bed of her husband in his sleeping quarters, which he, as a married son of the house, has exclusively for himself and his wives. Here she shares his bed with him and, in case he is already married, with his other wives.

/100 cont./

595 [583] On the wedding day the bridegroom, or his family, has to pay the bride's parents a sum of money fixed in advance. For the first wife this is about 150-200 pieces of silver the value of which corresponds approximately to the mark; for wives married later several times this amount is often given, since the first wife, who is regarded as the chief wife (nă thǭ), does not do any work herself once there are additional wives, but merely passes along the husband's orders to the younger wives (nă yǭ) /101/ and supervises their work. The husband himself does not give any orders to the younger wives. It is therefore a desirable position to be the chief wife in a household with several wives, and since any wife married later has to obey all the wives married earlier and therefore outranking her, a hard life usually begins for such a young wife upon her marriage, and cohabitation is only poor compensation for it, even though the husband usually prefers her as the younger.

184 585 The customs described by various other authors, each according to the region that he surveyed, are somewhat different. Savina, for instance, writes (1): "The wedding feast is

1. II. p. 226.

[264] [782] celebrated by the parents and parents-in-law. Men and women never sit together at the same table. At the end of the meal the bridegroom bows silently before the ancestors. Then the money that the guests brought with them is counted, and the trousseau of the bride is inspected. Weeping, the latter sings

585 533 the wedding song:

'Attracted by the singing of the decoy, the poor forest bird lets itself be caught by a snare. Imprisoned in a cage, it sadly watches its comrades fly in freedom.
'Oh, poor mother! Who will now get up early in the morning to light the fire on your hearth? Who will prepare the meal for you, who will tend your chickens and pigs? Who will go into the forest to look for firewood, who will fetch water from the spring? Who will split your hemp, who will weave your linen?'"

/101 cont./

184 584 Lajonquière (2) writes: "The wedding ceremonies seem to differ

2. II, p. 315.

somewhat in the details, but, taken as a whole, they are limited to the following: If a young man has his eye on a young girl, he informs his parents. His father selects two venerable men from his family to take gifts to the house of the girl. Among some Meau, these gifts consist of a small pig and alcohol; among others they are simply incense candles, which the go-betweens, as soon as they have arrived at the door, stick in the ground and light. In both cases, the father of the girl steps out-
[574] [201] side the door and /102/ invites the emissaries to partake of food and drink. If he has the food served to them outside the house, it means that the proposal is rejected. If he asks them to step inside, the invitation itself means that it has been accepted and that the marriage formalities can be discussed immediately."
[114] These statements were borrowed almost verbatim by Abadie (1).

1. Page 165.

184 574 585 Lajonquière (2) then continues very explicitly: "A great

2. II, p. 316.

feast, or rather a series of feasts which last two days, is prepared. Two days of joy, during which all the friends and relatives, called together from afar, bring gifts to the bridegroom, which enable him to supplement the very substantial bridal gift which he has to give to the parents of his future wife.
[583] This bridal gift sometimes is made up of 100 silver piasters, 100 kilograms of whiskey, a pig weighing one hundred kilograms, chickens, and so forth.

"When the day finally arrives, the young man, accompanied by his friends (there must be at least six men and two women), offers his gifts. The procession is gay on its journey and is led by mouth-organ players. A festive meal awaits them in the bride's house.

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/103 cont./

184 585 the bride into the house of the bridegroom, and when appropriate offerings have been made to the spirits and the relatives of both families have celebrated sufficiently, the wedding is over. Before giving their final consent, however, the bride's [583] parents demand 'ngön sin sot,' the money which is required for the wedding ceremony, from the bridegroom in accordance with their position and their expenses, but at least 150 ticals . . . , [426] but if the groom should be unable to raise such a sum at the moment, the bride's parents give it to him on credit."

583 426 This extending of credit for the purchase price is confirmed by the other two authors. Lajonquière (3), for instance,

3. II, p. 316.

writes in this connection: "If a young man cannot raise the sum required for a splendid wedding, he is still able to ask for the hand of even a rich girl. The family of the latter then defrays all the costs of the celebration. In turn the young couple is obligated to serve for one or several years in the house of the girl's parents or to buy themselves free by paying a certain sum." These statements were likewise borrowed by [114] Abadie (1) /see footnote 1 above/ almost verbatim.

595 It may also happen, however, that a man does not choose a young and pretty girl as his secondary wife, but a widow with many children, in order to acquire a work force. The chief wife, of course, benefits most from this in every respect, since all this work force is directly under her. Such marriages are therefore viewed happily and actually favored by the chief wife.

114 184 595 Lajonquière's statements (3) /see footnote 3 above/ which we find repeated verbatim in Abadie (4) and according to

4. Page 167.

which polygamy is permitted among the Meau, but the Meau takes a second wife only if the first one has remained sterile.

/104/

114 may perhaps be true for certain regions where the Meau find
184 themselves in especially tight economic straits. Dhuraratsa-
595 dorn (1) probably writes more accurately: "A man may take

1. Page 169.

as many wiyes as he wishes, but he needs the permission of his chief wife to do so. The concubines have to work for the husband and the chief wife like ordinary servants." Savina (2) adds that

2. II, p. 226.

polygamy is widespread among some tribes of the Meau, but is unknown among others.

583 Among the Meau the bride price plays an important role;
614 the entire large /extended/ family of the young husband helps
[596] to raise it. If the wife should for any reason later return to her parents, they must pay it back. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the sib is very interested in the good conduct of the married couple and is intent on not letting dissension between the young people become serious.

184 Abadie (3) reports on a strange custom which he describes
584

3. Page 166.

as follows from the Meau of the Pha-Long region: "They arrange a kind of marriage market. Here young men and girls, who have come from the surrounding area for several miles, meet one another. This meeting takes place on a plateau covered with grass. The young men and girls form groups which, at a distance of about twenty paces, turn their backs to each other. [533] These groups sing simple antiphonal songs in which the young men boast of their skill, strength, and wealth, while the young girls extol their housewifely virtues and the richness of their trousseau. A droll word often arouses general merriment; the laughter, singing, and dancing of the men, who play the

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M 184 584 /104 cont./ mouth organ, last throughout the afternoon. The vendors of alcohol and cakes do a thriving business while the young men and girls become more closely acquainted and lay the basis for a future union... During the days which follow this festival most of the official marriage proposals are made."

M 184 583 Lajonquière (4) describes a custom which is likewise un-

4. II, p. 315.

known among the Meau of Thailand: "The 'Notice von Quan-Ba' says that as soon as the marriage is arranged the young man serves for two years in the house of his future /105/ father-in-law and that the marriage is finally settled only at the end of this period, after both parties have had a chance to become acquainted with each other."

A 584 [301] Among the Akha there are two kinds of betrothal. The most common kind is the silent betrothal; the young people simply agree to marry. In this case the young man gives the girl one or several silver arm-rings, depending on his means, and the girl gives him a small gift in return. Such betrothals can also be broken off without much ado; the party breaking off the betrothal gives the gifts back to the other party, who, however, keeps the gifts given to him.

In the case of a public betrothal, however, the father of the bridegroom asks the bride's father for his daughter's hand. In general it is the young man who initiates this marriage offer, requesting his father to undertake the proposal. It also happens, however, that a father seeks to obtain the hand of a girl for his son without obtaining the consent of the son in advance. In each of the two cases the bride's father asks his daughter. If she accepts the proposal, the go-between, that is, the father of the young man, is given a bottle of alcohol. This means that the betrothal is concluded and cannot simply be dissolved without the agreement of the other party. If one party breaks

A [686] off the betrothal, the father of the other party has to be paid a large pig and 11 pieces of silver (ticals) as an indemnity from

/108 cont./

A 595 [422] [606] [179] even the clothes of the secondary wives, belong to her. Among the Akha, the position of the daughter-in-law, who is the first to be called upon for assistance in all the difficult or unpleasant work of the women, is similar to her position among the Meau, and presumably has likewise been influenced by the Chinese. Among the Akha, as among the Meau, after the wedding both sexes are required to observe marital fidelity, A M 837 684 which among the Meau at least is not always followed. If a man commits adultery with a girl, it is considered unimportant, provided that there are no consequences. If there are, the man must marry the girl or pay an indemnity agreed upon. It is different if a man commits adultery with a married woman and the affair is discovered. In this case, the seducer has to pay the deceived husband the entire bride price or he will be punished by the village chief. Moreover, the disclosure of A M [558] such a case is a terrible disgrace for the seducer, whose prestige in the community suffers greatly (see the section, "Dissolution of Marriage," in this chapter).

The obligation for marital fidelity for both sexes is stricter among the Akha than among the Meau.

A 184 837 Telford (1) reports that among the Akha of Kengtung

1. Page 108.

a married, but childless woman may have sexual intercourse now and then with an unmarried man. If she becomes pregnant, her husband has to /109/ slaughter a pig and give it to her lover. I assume that the reference to a slaughtered pig means that a sacrificial feast must be arranged.

A M 837 432 583 Wife exchange, the lending of wives, and outright wife-purchase, under which I do not include the indirect purchase for marriage described above, are equally unknown among the Meau and Akha. It can be assumed, I think, that in former times among the Meau a purchase of wives in some form as M 174 583 432 yet unknown might have been practiced. In any case this is indicated by the fact that the Meau believe it is not proper to sell the household broom, because this would be tantamount

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M 174 583 432 [648] [614] [736] to selling one's own wife. Some persons perhaps consider the intermediary activities of the Chinese traders as wife purchase (see the chapter, "Trade"). I do not think that this is correct, for, although young and pretty Meau women are sold outright by such traders, they are almost always temporarily accepted by the sib as unfree persons who are soon to marry a young man of the sib. Moreover, most of these cases concern women who have been unhappily married. I shall discuss this in detail in the section on "Dissolution of Marriage" in this chapter.

A 583 648 Contrary to the statements in the Siam Soc. Report (1),

1. I, p. 167.

I did not find any such activities by the Chinese traders among the Akha.

f) Marriage Obstacles and Regulations

M 582 648 563 Theoretically there is no tribal endogamy among the Meau in Thailand, so that here the Meau may marry their neighbors, the Tin, Kamuk, and, indeed, even Lao. Only with respect to the Yau does a strict marriage prohibition exist. Since, however, I could not find a single instance of a Meau who had married someone outside his tribe, it can probably be said that in practice even a strict tribal endogamy prevails. On the other hand, marriages between the various Meau tribes, that is, between the White and Black Meau, and so forth (see the chapter, "Statistical and Demographic Data and Differences between the Various Meau and Akha Tribes"), are common. M [114] Even Lajonquière (2), whose statements are borrowed almost

2. II, p. 193.

verbatim by Abadie (3), reports that in Indochina marriages be-

3. Page 165.

tween /110/ the various Meau tribes are customary, but those between Meau and other ethnic groups are rarer.

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586 769 extremely rare and usually the parents straighten out the matter. If there is a divorce nevertheless, the ancestors are not informed and no sacrifice is offered, lest the ancestors' attention be drawn to the unpleasant fact.

586 837 Among the Meau a husband has no divorce-right. This is only logical since it is possible for him to marry another girl at any time. The wife, on the other hand, can get a divorce, though this is somewhat difficult. To begin with, the only grounds for divorce for her is her own marital infidelity and her flight with the seducer. First of all, therefore, she has [558] to find a man who is willing to shoulder the unpleasant aspects of adultery and the ensuing loss of his prestige.

[694] If the adulteress refuses to return to her husband, the adulterer and seducer, or his family, must repay the bride price to the deceived husband. If he is not able to do this at once, he must pay it in installments, /113/ and this may sometimes take a long time. All of the woman's children [851] who were born before the complete recovery of the bride price belong to the former husband. The future children belong to the new husband only after the final payment of the bride price.

Moreover, the adulterer sought must be able to take upon [614] himself the enmity of the family of the husband, which is no [578] easy matter if this is a powerful sib. It is precisely in such [595] sibs, however, that unhappy wives are the most common. The husband is often old, has several wives, and is able to buy his new wife by reason of his money. She, in turn, had looked forward to a different life and instead is treated badly by the wives superior to her, but especially by her mother-in-law, whereas the husband pays no attention to her.

Since the regulations mean a heavy burden for the new husband, it is not easy for a wife eager for a divorce to obtain her freedom.

586 648 587 If the wife of a Meau sees absolutely no way out and yet wishes to leave her husband, she turns to a Chinese trader (see the chapter, "Trade"). They travel around a great deal and know all the Meau villages and the conditions prevailing among

[583]

/113 cont./

586 the rich and the poor. If the woman is young and pretty, it is
648 usually simple for the trader to persuade another rich Meau in a
[587] far-distant village to take the woman and to repay the bride
[583] price to the first husband. Otherwise, the trader sells the
[548] woman as a prostitute to one of the Chinese brothels.

In principle, the deceived husband has the right to kill
586 the adulteress and her seducer; in practice, this is hardly ever
837 done. Both Abadie (1) and Lanjonquière (2) write in the same
[114]

1. Page 167.

2. II.

words that generally the affair is settled through repudiation of
the wife and repayment of the bride price. Dhuraratsadorn (3),
[184]

3. Page 169.

however, reports that among the Meau in Thailand, if a wife commits adultery, her husband can get a divorce only with her consent. If she refuses, the marriage has to be continued. He says that the wife has no divorce-right at all because she -- since she is not permitted to return to her parents' house -- would have to support herself. This could be done, however, only under the greatest difficulties.

[114] /114/ These statements sound improbable, and I did not
[184] find them confirmed among the Meau in Thailand. It is possible, however, in case of a seduction of a wife, that the deceived husband asks his village chief to convene the popular assembly. In exceptional cases, the seducer may then be condemned to pay the entire bride price to the husband, while the wife must nevertheless remain with her husband as before.

586 Bad treatment is no more grounds for divorce than wife's laziness or a husband's inability to support his wife or childlessness. In all these cases, too, the bride price is not repaid.